



# Friends of Mana Island

## Work Party Report December 5-7 2025

Trip co-leaders: Philippa Doig, Andrea Wilson and Annemieke Hamilton

Participants: Colin Miskelly, Miguel Braga, Stephen Marsland, Monika Nowicki, Richard Grasse, Emily Polz, Peter Hunt, Skye Chalmers, Roisin McIvor, Melissa Hall, Julia White, Rose Cotter.

We were a group of 15 energetic and co-operative volunteers. The weather was good for working, dry and not too hot, and we had enough expertise and commitment to complete a lot of tasks.

### Friday night



Photo: Annemieke



Flax weevil pupa. Photo: Colin Miskelly



Captured flax weevils

Photo: Roisin

**Weevil MIQ.** Colin, Rose, Roisin, Andrea, Julia and Peter headed up to Weevil MIQ after dark on Friday evening to search for tagged weevils. The enclosure was built 5 years ago (when MIQ was a thing), and this project to investigate the flax weevil life cycle is winding to a close. The last tagged weevil was seen in February 2025. We will likely dismantle Weevil MIQ during the February 2026 FOMI working weekend.

The weevil hunters split into two teams of three, and found 42 flax weevils inside Weevil MIQ, and 157 outside. They also found several giant weta and goldstripe geckos, and a rarely-seen flax weevil pupa.

**Seabirds at South Point and the Petrel Station.** Stephen, Monika, Annemieke, Miguel and Emily climbed to South Point to monitor Fluttering Shearwaters and then moved on to the Petrel Station

**Kiwi walk.** Philippa, Melissa, Richard and Skye walked through the wetland to the House Valley track and were rewarded with a good sighting of a rowi kiwi dodging in and out of the track in front of them

### Saturday

**Swimming!** Emily and Skye, led by Melissa, braved the sea and the eagle rays for an early swim. They claimed it was a wonderful experience – the rest of the party were less enthusiastic.



Fluttering Shearwater chick



Lizards in a pitfall trap.  
Photo: Roisin



Seabird colony Photo Andrea



Fern bird nest Photo: Colin Miskelly

### Pitfall trapping at the flax weevil / fungus study site

Colin, Rose and Roisin set the 80 pitfall traps on Saturday morning, finding 609 Raukawa geckos in the process (with 49 living inside one trap). Colin, Miguel and Emily returned on Sunday morning, finding 232 lizards in the traps, including 131 Raukawa geckos (maximum 12 in one trap), 65 copper skinks, and 18 each of northern grass skinks and glossy brown skinks. Colin stayed on for a couple of hours to trim routes to each pitfall trap site through rapidly-growing dense *Coprosma propinqua* shrubs in Plot C, finding a fernbird nest in the process.

**Diving petrels.** This season's diving petrel chicks are in the process of departing to sea, with three having fledged by 6 December. Colin weighed and measured the remaining ten chicks on Saturday afternoon, several of which were completely free of down and ready to depart (they had been banded by Colin on a DOC trip on 20 November). Annemieke, Stephen, Roisin and Colin headed up to the Petrel Station on Saturday night and found a 14<sup>th</sup> diving petrel chick by tracing its begging call to a patch of *Coprosma propinqua*. While the chick is now banded, neither parent was caught, leaving a mystery to (hopefully) be resolved next breeding season.

**Fairy prions.** Colin also checked the 16 known fairy prion breeding burrows on Saturday afternoon. The prions are in the midst of hatching, with four adults on eggs, four adults brooding young chicks, three unattended eggs, and five unguarded (slightly older) chicks. Those chicks that survive to fledging will likely have departed before the next FOMI working weekend trip in mid-February, and so a special trip will need to be organised to band them in mid-January.



Photos: Melissa and Monika

**Fluttering shearwater site.** Annemieke, Peter, Monika, Stephen, Melissa and Julia worked on maintaining the artificial nest boxes while remembering the fragile chicks inside. The boxes were very overgrown with grass but were looking much more attractive to returning birds once the grass was cleared from the burrow entrances.

**Bindweed on the Waikoko Wetland track.** Roisin and Rose tackled the unenviable task of controlling bindweed. They made excellent progress, reaching the birdhide before they ran out of time.





Some of the photos: Philippa

**Yellow Pipe removal.** With some guidance from Colin who had been searching out senecio (pink ragwort) earlier in the year and incidentally noticed an area of bush where trees needed release from yellow pipes, Skye, Richard, Andrea and Philippa moved into a new area of bush near the weather station and spent a strenuous morning removing and carrying pipes to the track for collection by Jane with the vehicle. They were able to use two multitools which make the job easier although crawling through the bush and getting disorientated is as difficult as ever.

**Track clearing.** Miguel and Emily worked at clearing vegetation back from the Tirohanga track below the slip and then enjoyed a walk to the lighthouse.



Parent plant doing well. Seedlings and protective netting. *Photos: Andrea and Philippa*

**Cooks Scurvy Grass.** In the afternoon, Philippa and Andrea checked the status of the CSG seedlings and completed some of the monitoring of the 11 planting plots. They identified which plots needed further protection from pukeko so that materials could be brought up to the site on Sunday to protect these vulnerable seedlings and cuttings. Many tiny CSG plants were found but were very overgrown with grass and clover so weeding them was a delicate and slow task. Anyone who goes to the island during the summer might be encouraged to water these seedlings. The parent CSG plant is doing extremely well and in full flower. The remaining seeds from the FOMI cupboard were sown in places where the original seeding had failed.



Before and after pictures: Melissa

**Takahe Pen Clearing.** Richard and Skye moved to work on a takahe pen on the no access track. Unfortunately, this turned out not to be the pen identified by Jane but on Sunday Richard returned with a group of 3 helpers and together they made a huge difference to the overgrown fence.



**First Aid packs.** Andrea and Philippa sorted first aid equipment and set up 4 small first aid packs to be used in the field with a much larger and more comprehensive pack left in the FOMI cupboard.

## Sunday

**Takahe pen fence clearing.** Richard, Melissa, Julia and Skye made a fantastic difference to the correct takahe pen.

**Yellow pipe removal.** Today, Peter, Monika, Stephen and Philippa added to the pile of pipes near the weather station. Monika navigated the bush very efficiently and found a new and easier entry point. There were geckos and friendly robins to keep them company. One robin came close enough to have its bands read and this sighting was added to the map in the Lockwood.



Pitfall traps Photos Roisin

**Pitfall traps.** Miguel, Colin and Emily checked the traps that had been set overnight and were delighted to find many lizards and other wildlife.



photos Roisin

**CSG.** Andrea, Roisin and Rose returned to continue monitoring, weeding and covering the tiny seedlings at the Cook's Scurvy Grass site. They took extra plastic netting, cable ties and pegs to protect sites still open to pukeko predation.

**Barking gecko release site.** Andrea changed the tags showing where the barking (green) geckos had been released to make the site less obvious to visitors to the island.

**FOMI food cupboard.** FOMI needs to replace the emergency food in the cupboard because much of this is out of date. It was decided to take new cans, pasta and similar non-perishables on the next work party in February 2026

**FOMI material in the caravan.** Philippa has brought home some files home because Jane wants the FOMI archives taken away before the demolition of dangerous sheds and removal of debris and rubbish which may happen in the first part of next year. FOMI needs to decide what to do with this archival material.

**Lunch** The team gathered at the Lockwood for lunch around 1pm and cleaned the Lockwood in record time. Then several volunteers took advantage of the free time to have a walk to the Hole in the Rock. Others relaxed and/or helped with rubbish.



**Rubbish Disposal.** Two fadges of broken yellow pipes were taken to the mainland and disposed of at Porirua tip on Monday by Philippa as the Sunday afternoon deadline was missed (by 4 minutes!) at the Porirua tip.

Huge thanks to these 15 willing volunteers who gave up their weekend to help the restoration process on Mana Island. Not all the jobs were glamorous or interesting but all were useful, done cheerfully and there were some tired but happy people on the return boat to Paremata.

Thank you to Jane, DOC ranger, who supported us generously, trusted us with DOC materials and tools and was cheerful throughout. Also thanks to Glen Cooper for the reliable boat transport and although there was plenty of wind both Friday and Sunday the crossings weren't the worst we have ever suffered.



From left standing: Miguel (almost) Melissa, Andrea, Skye, Philippa, Colin, Richard, Roisin, Stephen, Monika, Emily, Julia.  
Sitting: Peter, Annemieke, Rose